

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

SANDPLAIN FLAX

(Linum intercursum Bickn.)

DESCRIPTION

Sandplain Flax is a slender perennial herb, 10-20" (25-51cm) tall. The stem is stiff and usually unbranched below the inflorescence. Its leaves are narrowly elliptic, less than one inch (12-20mm) long and less than $\frac{1}{4}$ " (2-4mm) wide. The small flowers are yellow, with 5 petals, and are borne on slender, stiff, ascending branches. Flowering occurs from July to August. The seed capsules are round with a short but distinct conical cap.

SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Two species of flax resemble Sandplain Flax in Massachusetts. Wild Flax (Linum virginianum) has branches which are more widely spread than those of L. intercursum and a similar seed capsule but without the pointed cap. Small Stiff Yellow Flax (L. medium) has narrower leaves and a similar seed capsule, but also without the pointed cap.



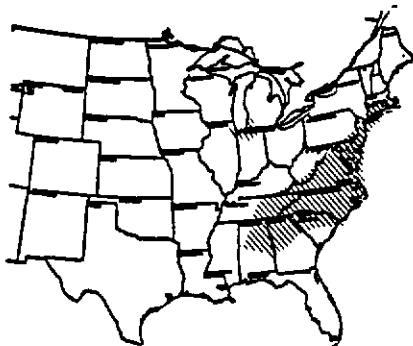
Britton, N.L. and N.A. Brown. An Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada. Dover Publications, Inc. 1970 reprint of 1913 ed.

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Sandplain Flax inhabits dry, open, sandplain grasslands or moors, sand barrens, swaths under powerlines and mown fields, usually in small colonies. Co-occurring species include Andropogon scoparius (Little Bluestem), Agrostis spp. (Ticklegrasses), Lechea spp. (Pinweeds), Gaylussacia baccata (Black Huckleberry), and Helianthemum spp. (Rockroses).

RANGE

Sandplain Flax ranges from southeastern Massachusetts along the coastal plain to North Carolina, then inland to northern Georgia, northern Alabama, and eastern Tennessee. It also occurs in northwestern Indiana.



(continued overleaf)



Distribution of Linum intercursum

● Verified since 1978
○ Reported prior to 1978

Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

SANDPLAIN FLAX (continued)

POPULATION STATUS

Sandplain Flax is considered a species of "Special Concern" in Massachusetts. Currently (1978 to present), 14 occurrences have been reported; historically 9 other occurrences have been recorded. Reasons for its rarity include its location in Massachusetts at the northern edge of its range and the succession of many open habitats to woody vegetation.